

# SAINT LOUIS BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Official Organ of The Saint Louis Bird Club  
for the Promotion of  
Bird Enjoyment, Bird Study and Bird Conservation

Vol. 2

March 8, 1933

Number 3

## CONTENTS

Bird Club Program	Page 9
Bird Walks	9
A Correction	9
A Note from President Hobbs	9
Humor or Mischief	9
Field Observations	9, 14
Editorial	10
Albino Robin	10
Bird Items	10, 14
Personals	10
Widmann Column	11
House Bill 320	11
Passer montanus montanus	11-14

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## BIRD CLUB PROGRAM

THE NEXT MEETING OF OUR CLUB  
will be held March 15, 1933, at  
Cabanne Library, 8 p.m. There will  
be a seasonable program on "Bird  
Migration." Bring your friends.

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## BIRD WALKS

Mr. Robert Barrell will lead  
the Shaw Garden Bird Walks,  
leaving the Main Gate at 7.30 each  
Saturday morning during April.

The Forest Park Bird Walks  
will start from the Jefferson Me-  
morial at 8.30 a.m., with the fol-  
lowing leaders:

April 1, Dr. R. J. Terry  
April 8, Mr. L. M. Dougan  
April 15, Miss Helen Dykeman  
April 22, Mr. George Mackay  
April 29,

The Creve Coeur all-day walk  
will be on May 6, 1933. B.Cousland.

## A CORRECTION

On Page 7, vol. 2, the subspecies  
name of the Giant Red-wing should be  
arctolegus. Ed.

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## A NOTE FROM PRESIDENT HOBBS

Are we following the Audubon Soci-  
ety-Edge Conservation Committee con-  
trovery? Recent bulletins of the  
latter (the opposition) are interest-  
ing and, per se, convincing: at any  
rate, it behooves us to acquaint our-  
selves with both points of view and be  
qualified to take an intelligent  
stand, as a Club, upon the future of  
our Audubon Society. R. L. Hobbs.

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## HUMOR OR MISCHIEF?

Have birds a sense of humor or are  
they mischievous? One morning recent-  
ly our feeding station (an old nail  
keg turned on its side and wedged be-  
tween two posts) was occupied by a  
large flock of English Sparrows while  
a Hairy Woodpecker was busily pecking  
at a piece of suet three feet higher  
up on the same post. Without the least  
warning, he suddenly left the suet to  
pounce down heavily upon the "roof" of  
the keg. Well, you should have seen  
those Sparrows scramble out and away  
from the two ends of it while the  
Hairy gave every indication of thor-  
oughly enjoying his prank!

Last summer a cocky Robin flew  
hurriedly across the yard and landed  
with a thud upon the roof of the Blue-  
bird house whose occupants scurried  
out and drove him away. C. Heising.

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## FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Charlottesville, Va.

Feb. 19, Red-headed Woodpecker in  
town.

Feb. 24, Killdeer, Phoebe, Doves,  
Mockingbirds, Robins and Brown Creepers  
Plenty of Myrtle Warblers and Purple  
Finches.

Feb. 24, after dark, Woodcock  
(apparently dazed) zigzagging its way a-  
cross Main Street amid the electric  
(continued on page 14.)

March 8, 1933

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## Officers

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## EDITORIAL

The most comprehensive articles on the European Tree Sparrow which have come to our attention since Mr. Widmann's pamphlet on "Summer Birds of Shaw's Garden," 1909, are Mrs. A. F. Satterthwait's paper, "Notes on the European Tree Sparrow," read before the Wilson Ornithological Club at Nashville, Tenn., in Dec., 1927, and the article by Mr. Robert W. Barrell, "The European Tree Sparrow in the Mississippi Valley," in the Bulletin of the Saint Louis Nature Study Society, for September, 1930. Ed.

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There is a nice contribution to the knowledge of weights of birds by Maurice Braun, Austin Ornithological Research Station, Eastham, Massachusetts, in "Bird Banding," published for the Northeastern, the Eastern and the Inland Bird Banding Associations, January, 1933, 52-54. Thirty-eight species are represented in the report, of which only one was represented in the writer's report in this St. Louis Bird Club Bulletin of Dec. 4, 1932. This was the Catbird. His records cover 66 specimens, not more than seven records for any one species. Ed.

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## ALBINO ROBIN

Never before have I seen so white a Robin as on Feb. 24, 1933. Suddenly a blurry whiteness in a tree would at-

Page 10

tract attention, and by focussing binoculars on it, it would prove to be the Albino Robin that we had been notified was for the third consecutive day in Southeast Webster Groves. I watched it for about an hour. First with about 6 other Robins running along the furrows of some freshly plowed ground; later, in a fringe of trees and low growth along a small stream in a slight hollow, flitting about or preening, and still later, with other Robins in a field between the trees and plowed ground, until it flew to an adjoining field beyond my range of vision. Juncos and Song Sparrows were singing and Field Sparrows flitting in the fencerow along the road, Meadowlarks in the far field, Cardinals whistling and Blue Jays calling in nearby trees, English Sparrows were about the barn, and 1 Starling was observed on a barnyard fence post. The plumage of the Albino Robin was a slightly dingy white all over except the breast which was red but decidedly lighter than normal. Beak yellow. Feathers from base of mandibles to top of head apparently tinged with light brownish gray. Tail slightly tinged with very light brown.

E. A. Satterthwait.

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## PERSONALS

Professor M. H. Swenk, of Lincoln, Nebr., who has served as president of the Wilson Ornithological Club and of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union and as secretary of the latter organization for many years, attended the sessions of the Central Plant Board and of the North Central States Entomologists' Conference in St. Louis, March 1, 2, and 3. Ed.

Professor J. S. Houser, Entomologist, Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station at Wooster, attending the Conference last week, paid a high tribute to the tree-cleaning birds of that state. He stated that practically all codling moth larvae wintering in cracks of bark on tree trunks above the soil cover, are destroyed by the birds generally in Ohio orchards. Ed.

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PLEASE SEND DATA on winter habitat of Red-headed Woodpecker by March 31.



## WIDMANN COLUMN

Starlings may have been here all winter, but I did not see any until after the spell of subzero weather, when on February 15 two were seen in Forest Park with House Sparrows and a Bobwhite at their feeding place near the bird cage. On the following day, Feb. 16, a troop of 15 was on a tree from which they came down to feed on the lawn within a short distance from the Clayton Road in Forest Park. Besides the size, shape and coloration it is the yellow bill and short tail that make identification easy.

On February 20th the first Mockingbird was seen in Brentmoor together with a big troop of Cedarbirds and two Robins; another smaller troop of Cedar birds (10) was found in Carrswold with two Flickers feeding on the ground, and a Cardinal singing to a troop of Juncos in Hampton Park. The 21st of February was a busy day for the bird student. Migration was active. Robins were in large numbers scattered over the whole of Valhalla cemetery and a like flock of robins with Starlings in Oak Grove cemetery. Three Mockingbirds were in Valhalla acting like old friends coming within a few feet of us. At the same place a few Bluebirds in high dress acted like real harbingers of spring. In Mt. Zion we found a troop of Juncos and the most beautiful Pussy Willows. On February 23rd a Mockingbird greeted the visitor near the entrance to Mt. Lebanon and not far away eight Killdeer gave us the pleasure of a performance of running matches like old acquaintances. At the same place a Meadowlark was the first I had seen this year. A trip to Creve Coeur Lake on the 24th brought nothing of interest except a very large Gull and the second Migrant Shrike of the year at an old station. The 28th showed us the first Orocus in a rock garden on Lindell Blvd. and the second Meadowlark in Hampton Park, also my first Brown Creeper, and, a novel sight for the time of year, a troop of 20 Cedarbirds stationed on treetops catching insects on the wing. O. Widmann.

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## HOUSE BILL 320

....A bill to amend the present game and fish law of the State of Missouri by removing the bounty law on hawks and owls has been prepared by Mr. Luther Ely Smith and Dr. R. J. Terry and, by the cordial cooperation of Senator A. L. McCauley, has been introduced as House Bill 320 before the present assembly.

Under the existing statute \$3000. is set aside annually for the payment of bounties for the killing of hawks, eagles and horn owls, a sweeping indictment and in conflict with the provision of another section of the law which includes in the protected list all the birds of prey excepting the sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk and the great horned owl.

House Bill 320 places all the raptors, except the turkey vulture, found in Missouri, on the protected list. No exceptions were made because of the known extensive destruction of protected hawks and owls by hunters mistaking them for those not on the protected list. The bill provides, however, that any hawk or owl may be killed by a land-owner or tenant when these birds are found destroying poultry or game on his land. At this date the bill has passed its third reading and there is every expectation of its unanimous passage in the House,

R. J. Terry.

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## PASSER MONTANUS MONTANUS (LINN.)

EUROPEAN TREE SPARROW. Range: British Isles, Europe and northern Siberia. Introduced into the United States in 1870, at St. Louis, Mo., where it has become established. (A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, 1931.)

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## PASSER MONTANUS

(A Practical Handbook of British Birds, by H. F. Witherby, Vol. 1.)

Field-characters: Though often feeding in winter in farmyards with other Finches, is usually of retiring nature. Both sexes are alike and differ from male House Sparrows in smaller size, trimmer build, black patch on ear-coverts, and chocolate-colored, not grey, crown. Double white wing-bar is

March 8, 1933

another, though less obvious, distinction. Notes bear general resemblance to House Sparrow's, but are perhaps shriller, and "chee-ip, chup" is distinctive. Birds flying across open fields--often singly--may be detected by their sharp "teck, teck."

Characters and Allied Forms: Differs from House Sparrow in sexes being alike, smaller size, magenta-chocolate crown and nape, black spot on ear-coverts, whiter sides of neck, whitish tips of greater coverts, smaller and whitish tips of median coverts, more yellowish axillaries, black of throat without white tips in winter and not so extended on breast.

Food: Seeds of weeds, corn, as well as insects of various kinds.

Breeding-habits: More retiring than House Sparrow but locally common in suburbs of some large towns, breeding in holes of ivy-covered trees, pollarded willows, haystacks, thatched roofs, quarries and old nests of lar-

disagreeable House Sparrow (Passer domesticus). This new revelation was a somewhat smaller bird, possessed a distinctly sweeter chirp, and held himself as much aloof from the common herd as would be possible in a yard already peppered with "gutter and sidewalk" Sparrows. I soon began observing markings of this other Sparrow: a chocolate head in place of the ashy-gray of the House Sparrow, two very fetching black beauty spots, one on each cheek, and a clearly defined white ring extending almost around the entire neck. I may say now, after watching this bird many times, that it is the pretty black blotches on the cheeks which I first look for, and so I believe this to be the bird's easiest identification mark.

For a time I was puzzled over a name for this new Sparrow; there was nothing whatever in the usual bird books of national repute that answered to the above description...what in the world had I unearthed? Then, by great fortune, I found the name and one of the few existing pictures of the bird in that invaluable pamphlet by our own Mr. Otto Widmann, "Summer Birds in Shaw Gardens," (St. Louis, 1909). This pamphlet contains, under the European Tree Sparrow, a splendid summary of the history of this species from its original introduction into the city of St. Louis up to the occasional nature of observations of the bird



House Sparrow, ♂ adult      European Tree Sparrow  
(either sex)

ger birds; also in Woodpecker's holes and Sand-Martin's burrows.

Distribution: Europe generally and Siberia. Closely allied forms in Japan, Turkestan, Persia, India, China, etc. Contributed by N. R. Barger.

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#### NOTES ON OBSERVATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN TREE SPARROW (PASSER MONTANUS)

It was during October of 1931 that I first began to notice, in our yard, a Sparrow which for one reason or another did not seem to coincide with the ubiquitous, noisome, and frankly

being reported at the time of publication of this pamphlet.

I trembled over the possibility of having the pair first noted in our yard driven quickly away by the House Sparrows, but I am most happy to state that the newcomers, from the outset, have proven themselves thoroughly capable of self-defense and so have remained close by ever since. A summary of my dates for these birds (limited most of the time to one pair, although I have an entry in my journal of two pairs observed back in October and No-



March 8, 1933

November, 1931) follows:

1931-

Oct. 24, 25.

Nov. 1, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 21, 23, 29.

Dec. 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 27. (On Dec. 12, I found one individual over on North Gore Ave., Webster Groves; I feel this must have been a third bird.)

1932-

Jan. 14, 17, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31. (On Jan. 24, one of the pair frequenting our yard flew into the cellar through an open window, remained over night, and was banded by Mr. Satterthwait next morning, after capture in a net in the kitchen of our house.)

Feb. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 27, 28.

Mar. During this month it became apparent that the pair in our yard had become settlers and I noticed them inspecting a House Wren box suspended from an oak tree outside the dining-room window. From this time until my observations in May, this pair fussed around this box and eventually built a nest in it, hatched eggs, and raised a brood; most of this very interesting process escaping me, partly because it transpired within the depths of an inaccessible Wren house, partly because I had busied myself with other matters.

May 10. First noticed the pair had young in the Wren box.

May 14. Four or five young, I believe; head, bill and eyes fully developed. The young are very noisy at feeding time.

May 16. Young still in the box. On the 15th, several of us took pictures of the adults feeding the young and gained one or two good results.

May 18. Very early in the morning the little ones took off from their box. We saw no part of this first flight, but Mrs. Hobbs found some of the little ones flying about later in the day and reported their flight strong and sure.

May 19. Saw one of the adults coming

Page 13

out of the box, - perhaps making it ready for another brood?

May 21. Adults again at the box, carrying nesting material.

June 2. Much new grass and leafy bits interwoven with the old nest. I climbed on a stepladder to peer into the box and found it practically filled to capacity, with a tunnel-like bore running down through the middle.

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On one occasion, April 11, 1932, in company with Mr. Barger of our Club, I found three of these European Tree Sparrows in a yard opposite the Creve Coeur Golf Course out on Olive Road.

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When we returned to St. Louis in the fall of 1932, I first saw the European Tree Sparrow again in our yard Oct. 2. It turned up intermittently during October and November, and settled at the old Wren house again about November 20, filling the box with grasses and feathers in much the way of the House Sparrow, as a winter house. Since November, then, this famous little pair has been with us daily and I believe there is no question but that they will breed again this spring. If so, I promise to make more frequent and careful observations during the nesting period, that we may have better data. The adults feed occasionally at our dining-room feeding box and bathe at the bath in the yard.

Robert L. Hobbs, Webster Groves.

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#### PASSER MONTANUS MONTANUS

The European Tree Sparrow was decidedly more plentiful in Webster Groves, Mo., in 1921 than it is now, but it has really never been common in this locality in the more than 14 years that we have lived here. Our records show more observations of it in 1921 than any year since: April 3, '21, in woodland in Southeast edge of Webster, a flock of 15; Nov. 13, '21, in unkempt area in heart of Webster, 25; Nov. 30, '21, in our garden at 118 Waverly Place, 2; Dec. 4, '21, in our garden, 8. From 1922-27, we had from one

March 8, 1933

to 3 each spring and autumn. About 10 years ago a pair built in a box on the porch post of the U. S. Entomological Laboratory, then on Yeddo Avenue. Since 1927 at long intervals, sometimes skipping more than a year, we have seen from 1 to 3 at 118 Waverly Pl. It is evident therefore, that *Passer montanus montanus* does not hold its own in this neighborhood and has been pushed farther and farther out into the country. Whether attributable to the great increase in building, the numerous cats and dogs, or the English Sparrow we cannot tell. We observe it occasionally in Missouri Botanical Garden, at Clayton, at Boschertown, St. Charles, and Monarch, Mo., and now and then when driving along country roads.

We have banded 5 European Tree Sparrows, and as in the case of all birds banded, took certain measurements of them, and also, for the sake of comparison, took measurements of English Sparrows caught in the trap at the same time. Two of our records follow: *P. domesticus domesticus*, Dec. 18, '25 Total length, 6 3/8"; wing, 3"; beak, 7/16"; tail, 2.25"; tarsus, .75"; iris brown; crown gray, 1 whitish wing bar, no white collar.

31326, *P. montanus montanus*, ad., Nov. 17, '26, 2.30p.m. Total length, 5 3/8"; wing, 2 11/16"; beak, 3/8"; tail, 2 1/16"; tarsus, .75"; iris, brown; tail slightly V-shaped; slight wing bar creamy or tawny; back and wings sparrowy; rump olive gray or brown; tail feathers grayish-brown with tiny margin of lighter color; black cheek spot 5/16" in diameter; cheek almost white or ashy white; white ring almost all around neck; black between eye and beak and around beak; black spot under beak on throat. Caught with 2 Juncos and 8 English Sparrows. Total lengths of 2 English Sparrows measured Nov. 17, '26, 5 7/8 and 6.50.

A. F. and E. A. Satterthwait, in cooperation with the Biological Survey.

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FIELD OBSERVATIONS (from page 9)

wires.

N. R. Barger.

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Webster groves, Mo.:

Eastern Sparrow Hawk, Feb. 12, 23, 25;

Page 14

Red-bellied Woodpecker, Feb. 23;

Red-headed Woodpecker, Feb. 16, 17 and rather regularly since, I have heard one near home.

Eastern Mockingbird, Feb. 26, on front lawn;

Eastern Robin, Feb. 26, heard first song, which was very subdued and uncertain.

Eastern Bluebird, Feb. 23, several males frantically chasing each other near Frisco Tracks and Selma. (Mating rivalry?)

Feb. 26, several, singing;

Mar. 4, a pair investigating one of our bird houses; my date for this first investigation last year was Feb. 22.

Eastern Meadowlark, Jan. 29, Feb. 2, 15, 16 and rather regularly since; in 1931, my first observation hereabouts was Feb. 27; in 1932 I found them occasionally throughout the entire winter;

Bronzed Grackle, absent this winter; in 1932, I have records as early as Feb. 6 and 11, after which they came in flocks into our vicinity and settled on the lawns to feed;

Eastern Cardinal, Feb. 26-Mar. 4, singing regularly;

Eastern Chipping Sparrow, Feb. 27, one seen plainly and clearly heard chipping, on north Gore Ave.; according to available records this is a very early date;

Eastern Song Sparrow, Feb. 23, 25, 26, 27, several seen, and heard one in full song;

St. Louis County, Lindbergh Hiway;

Eastern Bluebird, Feb. 12, one female;

St. Louis Co., Natural Bridge Rd.;

Migrant(?) Shrike, Feb. 16. R.L. Hobbs.

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#### BIRD ITEMS

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird will attack and generally drive off a much larger bird, such as a Crow or even an Eagle, that endangers its nest. Science News Letter, Feb. 11, 1933.

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More bird life can be seen in the Everglades region of Florida than anywhere else in the United States today. Science News Letter, Feb. 11, 1933.

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